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ABSTRACT

A child progresses from listening to speaking, to developing vocabulary and word recognition skills, to reading the printed page. After a child develops language, vocabulary enrichment should be provided in a functional, meaningful, and real manner. Putting words in syntactical structure, hanging them around the room as labels, or mounting them on cardboard assist children in beginning creative word usage. Comprehension in beginning reading comes through understanding that the printed symbols stand for words that are used in everyday speech. Exposure to sight words and to a wide variety of children's literature provides the word recognition necessary for comprehension. The conceptual development necessary for successful reading can be encouraged by introducing the child to the sequencing of events and the physical properties of the world and to literature. Parental involvement can provide this stimulus, but the most important element is time, the time a parent or teacher takes to read to young children and to listen to their responses. (JL)

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A Recipe for Motivating Successful Readers

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A RECIPE FOR MOTIVATING SUCCESSFUL READERS

Consider the following recipe for successful readers:

Recipe:

Blend: 1 book

1 dozen children

Add: 1 interested adult

These three ingredients combined in a relaxed and enjoyable time each day will greatly aid children in developing an interest in reading, and more importantly, in enjoying reading. A child progresses from listening to speaking, to developing vocabulary and word recognition skills, to reading the printed page.

Concepts and vocabulary knowledge are prerequisites for beginning reading. The use of a variety of children's literature is one technique for the development of motivation for reading success. Parents and teachers are responsible for growth and expansion of meaning in reading, and need to recognize the important role children's literature can play.

The Beginning

From the moment of awakening in a new world, an infant hears language all around. During a child's first year, by listening to rhythm, tones and critical changes in sound, the motivated child imitates the language heard. Many language acquisition specialists

feel that it is no spontaneous combustion, no sudden miracle springing out of sheer good luck. It is, instead, the result of a fascinating process of development.

At approximately five months, a child begins to babble, then to repeat sounds, think about language, and usually by twelve months, the words begin to come--followed by longer sentences. The child experiences language and develops amazing rules for pronunciation, syntax, plurals and tenses and the use of newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful sentences. A new language has developed for a child--from cooing sounds to demands, requests, and expressions of emotion in verbal form. The first sentences are so fascinating: a request for information, multiple "I do's" and "I wants," orders to follow and then the eternal "Why's?".

Vocabulary Unfolds

The enrichment of vocabulary is an expected extension of the child's language experiences. Without a store of meaningful concepts in oral language, a child cannot apply associations to printed symbols. As children experiment with utterances and sounds, they begin to discover the magic of words. Children develop expression and facilitate their aural recognition and retention of words through a wide range of experiences. Dictation of stories, labeling of possessions, and playing with language allows the linkage of spoken and written language. As children listen to a story and follow the words, they associate symbols to meaningful concepts. The

practical requests using words which are important to children should supply adult educators with beginning reading vocabulary.

Word development needs to unfold in a functional, meaningful and real manner. The child needs appropriate words to communicate efficiently with adults and other children. Words such as "dog," "Mom," "Dad," "cereal," and "juice" are important in the practical experiences of the child's world. Newspaper and magazine advertisements are a good resource for these functional words and are readily available for cutting out different shapes and sizes of words which enhance visual configuration. The child looks for distinguishing features of words of similar form as in "she" and "she'll" and "think" and "thank." Beginning alphabetizing can be developed by arranging pictures or words in order--a much more appropriate task than parroting the alphabet which only impresses parents and grandparents. Putting words in syntactical structure, hanging them around the room as labels, or mounting them on cardboard assist children in beginning creative word usage.

Comprehension

The act of reading with the emphasis on comprehension is primarily a process of creating meaningful concepts from printed symbols. Two important facets of conceptual development include the child's personal experience and the awareness of written language. For example, the word "round" must have experience behind the letters of the word because the printed symbols do not look "round."

Before young children truly read this word, they must experience seeing and feeling something which is round. Reading involves more than mere word pronunciation and conceptual recognition. During the initial stages of reading the child is taught how to use a variety of pictures, configurations and other clues to develop their sight vocabulary.

Children need to experience the importance and usefulness of context or meaning, picture clues, phonics, and structural analysis with written and spoken words. Exposure to sight words should occur as frequently as possible. In order to read independently, a child must learn ways to discover new words, familiar concepts or multiple meanings in their appropriate context. The meaning of the word, phrase or sentence is the most important aspect of building vocabulary. Techniques of word recognition require expansion to include a vocabulary complete with rich associations. One vehicle for accomplishing this is through a wide variety of children's literature. If children do not have a clear concept of a word's meaning, appropriate experiences must be devised to make that word an understandable part of their vocabulary.

Comprehension in beginning reading comes through understanding that the printed symbols stand for words that are used in everyday speech. Later, experience charts aid in the natural transition between prereading and formalized reading and are excellent for developing comprehension at all levels exhibiting the relationship between spoken and written language.

Conceptual Development

Encouraging growth in concept development in young children is essential for successful reading. Sequencing of events promotes literal conceptual growth. After reading a story, the order of events may be orally discussed, then sequenced in writing by an adult. Role playing the story provides further reinforcement for sequential and conceptual development, and stories can "come alive" through dramatizations, choral reading, and pantomimes. Literal growth can be enhanced by utilizing picture cards with matching synonyms and antonyms for word identification. Rhyming words or beginning and ending sounds, matched or reviewed using clip clothespins, in addition to a homonym fish pond reinforce these skills.

Another important aspect of conceptual development is recognition of physical properties of the world. Distinguishing forms, colors, and numbers seem more interesting in Hoban's Circles, Triangles, Squares[1] when used in conjunction with manipulative shapes of cardboard, plastic or wood. The identification of shapes of playground equipment and road signs and use of sandpaper numbers and letters may also be helpful to the beginning reader. Oral reading and discussion of books like Colors[2] by Allington or Shapes and Things[3] by Hoban help extend understandings of these concepts.

Enhancing interpretation skills might be accomplished through the selection of an imaginative fantasy such as C. S. Lewis' The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe[4]. Children pretend they are visiting Narnia, and discuss and role play the sounds, the colors, and

the feelings of that "always winter and never Christmas land."

Introduce emotions in literature to children with Pierre[5] by Maurice Sendak. Explore solutions to problems of sibling rivalry through Alexander's Nobody Asked Me If I Wanted a Baby Sister[6] or conflict situations in Let's Be Enemies[7] by Udry. Charlotte Zolotow's The Hating Book[8] or Sam[9] by Ann Herbert Scott are superior springboards to discussions on feelings. The book, My Five Senses[10] by Aliki, is an excellent approach to develop practical affective experiences.

Successful Reading

Learning to read is an important happening for young children. Reading is far more than just the mastery of isolated skills; it is truly enjoying and understanding pictures and the printed pages. When one has observed a child completely absorbed in a book, the memory of those first decoded words, verbalization of sounds from print to meaningful concepts, successful answers to comprehension questions, should remind the parent and teacher of the importance of early exposure to literature. As materials become progressively more difficult, children will have the ability to absorb new vocabulary and concepts and continue to choose literature for leisure-time enjoyment.

Parents and teachers expand visual dimensions of reading for children through the use of illustrations, movies, filmstrips and video cassettes. The auditory modality can be strengthened by the

use of records, tape recordings, radios, and listening centers. Pop-up, texture, and manipulative books assist the child in increased kinesthetic awareness. Literary-related adaptations are available in the above mentioned media.

Parent Involvement

Reading as an exciting and fun experience should begin in the lap or at the knee of an adult reader. Voice modulation which adds humor or expectancy to the story, facial expressions which reveal emotions in the story show a new world to the young child. By listening to a variety of literature and stories about many different subjects, the egocentricity of the child will expand and encompass new interest and experiences. Later the child will want to hear and read more about these subjects. The familiar rhythms of well loved nursery rhymes and favorite verses of the adult reader can foster a love of poetry in the child. Poems about a snowfall, a caterpillar, a hurt finger held in ready reference assure that poetry can meaningfully fit the mood of the moment. A walk on a snowy day can be aesthetic and significant especially when coupled with a poetic experience with "Cynthia in the Snow"[11] by Gwendolyn Brooks.

It Sushes.
It hushes
the loudness in the road.
It flitter-twitters,
And laughs away from me.

It laughs a lovely whiteness
And whitely whirs away.
To be some otherwhere,
Still white as milk or shirts,
So beautiful it hurts.

As children are read the verse a second time they may want to close their eyes and visualize the scene. Subsequent enjoyment is derived from putting mental images on paper, role playing descriptive words or spontaneous creative writing. When poems and stories are read daily, children tend to memorize rhythmic and melodious phrases. Children singing along with recorded music or dramatizing stories add firsthand meanings. Finger plays are an alternate method of teaching poetry or nursery rhymes. At older levels, finger plays become charades and allow body language to develop for added communication. From all genre of literature, children discover and are motivated to master the skills of reading so that they can read and learn independently. An added benefit of literature is gaining insight into problems faced by individuals. Oral reading and discussion can bring these problems into proper focus and perspective for adults and children alike.

The key ingredient in the recipe to inspiring successful readers is TIME. A parent or teacher must allow time in each day to read to young children, and time to permit them to discuss the ideas presented in the literature and pictures accompanying it. Children need time to respond to literature through discussions, art or craft

projects, role playing or puppetry. When adults have interesting experiences, they want to talk about them. Children likewise require time for responding to the literature they particularly love in a variety of ways.

Summary

A child's journey from listening to speaking, to vocabulary and word recognition, to reading and concept development is not an effortless one. Language development and growth do not just happen. They are influenced by intelligence, sight and hearing, by how well the children learn the use of speech organs and by the natural tempo for maturation. Personal communication is natural and is usually acquired in a natural progression. The reading process is but one of the communicative skills and should be mastered by the young child in an enjoyable manner to add to listening and speaking which have become a part of their communication. We can encourage all areas of concept and vocabulary development by significant creative expression and activities in movement and music, and in drama and literature. Language and vocabulary development and reading then will be exciting and meaningful in the life of the child--a succes recipe!

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